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Conference to address childhood and disaster mental health needs

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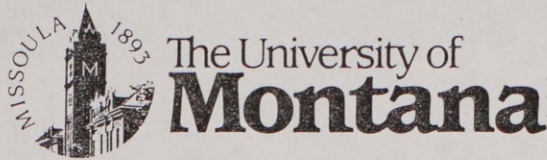
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NEWS RELEASE

April 20, 2005

Contact: Matt Taylor, assistant director for outreach, UM Division of Educational Research and Service, (406) 544-7305.

CONFERENCE TO ADDRESS CHILDHOOD AND DISASTER MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

MISSOULA —

Childhood traumatic stress, post-traumatic stress disorder and trauma response in times of war, terrorism, natural disaster and school violence will be the focus of the upcoming 2005 Montana Counseling Association Conference.

The event will be held Thursday and Friday, April 21-22, at the Great Northern Hotel in **Helena**. It's being offered by the Division of Educational Research and Service at The University of Montana and St. Vincent Health Care of **Billings**.

Lt. Gov. John Bohlinger will open the conference Thursday, followed by a keynote speech from Richard Yep, executive director of the American Counseling Association. Topics covered during the two-day program will include discussions on mental health trauma interventions with child sexual abuse, as well as presentations on rural health care policy issues and disaster coordination.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month. Both issues will be addressed during the conference.

Studies suggest that more than 25 percent of American youth are exposed to a significant traumatic event before the age of 16. While many children are able to effectively

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cope with these events, such trauma does predispose particularly vulnerable children to post-traumatic stress disorder and a number of learning and behavioral challenges. These issues are particularly important to address in Montana because of the state's high adolescent suicide rates.

Conference funding was partially provided by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and from a U.S. Department of Justice project supported by U.S. Sen. Conrad Burns. Additional collaboration on the conference was provided by the Montana Mental Health Association and Intermountain Children's Home and Services, both of Helena. For more information call (406) 544-7305 or visit <http://www.montanacounseling.org>.

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